

# Optimize your LinkedIn Profile with this Guide and Checklist

LinkedIn is a powerful tool in your job search. It facilitates streamlined connections with key industry players and helps you get your credentials in front of recruiters and decision makers. A complete and robust profile not only allows your inner circle to understand what you bring to business but will also increase the odds of your profile being found by a recruiter or decision maker who is seeking a professional with your capabilities.

Make no mistake, LinkedIn is a viable, integral part of today’s recruitment process for companies and recruiters. Rather than paying for an expensive advertisement, most hiring professionals will visit LinkedIn to find a candidate as a first option. From an exposure perspective, this makes your LinkedIn profile as important, if not more important, than your resume. It is also highly likely that after your resume is seen, your LinkedIn profile will be looked up.

**HERE ARE A FEW POINTERS TO GET YOU STARTED:**

* Improve the chances of your profile being seen by a hiring manager:
	+ **Upgrade to LI Premium Career Plan**. This expands your ability to leverage the site for increased exposure, networking contacts, and access to information. First month is free, then 29.99/month.
	+ **Update your LI Job Seeking Preferences**. Go to Settings & Privacy | Select Privacy Tab and scroll down to Job Seeking Preferences | Update settings in all areas.
	+ **#Opentowork.** Allow your network and/or recruiters to know that you are actively seeking new employment. This is a highly beneficial feature and the only place on the profile that we recommend advertising being in a job search. This will add an Open to Work box directly below your headline information, and enables messaging to you without a connection or premium account. Consider placing the frame around your profile picture by selecting All LinkedIn Members in your preferences. Go to Add Profile Section, Intro, Looking for a New Job.
	+ **Utilize Career Explorer.** Discover popular skills to include in your Skills section and demonstrated as keywords throughout your profile. <https://linkedin.github.io/career-explorer/#explore>
* **Populate your contact information** with an email address so that hiring managers may contact you. If you choose to share Websites be sure that they are relevant to your target and represent you appropriately.
* **Visit your LinkedIn site daily** and be an active LinkedIn member. Post an update, discussion, or share an article. Check in with and review commentary from your groups. Find new contacts by searching using industry and position keywords. Network with mutual connections to make introductions for discussions.
* **Use LinkedIn to search for openings of jobs of interest** and research companies by visiting the Jobs tab. Filter by location, salary, and more.**Get job alerts**: Turn the job alert toggle on for weekly or daily updates when jobs open matching your search. Choose notification type.
* **Follow your favorite companies** to keep a pulse on their business, industry trends, and job openings. [LinkedIn help – Following Companies](https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/3539/~/start-or-stop-following-a-company). **Follow and participate in Groups** related to your career. Follow Influencers and Schools to expand your network.
* **Create a custom backdrop design** behind your professional photo that matches your professional brand at <https://www.canva.com/linkedin-banners/templates/>, [unsplash.com/backgrounds/apps/linkedin](https://unsplash.com/backgrounds/apps/linkedin), or at [www.linkedinbackground.com](http://www.linkedinbackground.com).

**One of the most powerful ways to use LinkedIn is to use your connections to identify potential networking contacts at your targeted companies. You can do this in several ways:**

* Post a “discussion” in groups and request a networking contact at a targeted company. Be as specific as possible for the type of contact you seek (i.e., Title of Hiring Manager at a specific company or you can simply list a request for a person at a particular company / location).
* Post your need in your update section and it will display to all of your networking contacts.
* Click on the search magnifying glass icon to launch the search feature. Here you can find people, companies, jobs, etc. Nurture your existing network and work to build new connections!

Generating a powerful LinkedIn profile is only the first step. You also need to become an active user and continue to expand your contacts and exposure. Meridian can help. Talk to your coach today about your LinkedIn strategy.

**GUIDE**

**Do you have a professional and appropriate LinkedIn photo?**

Including a photo is essential. Not having one can lead to a hiring manager or recruiter passing you by. While it does not have to be a studio portrait, it should be professional looking with a neutral background. It should represent who you are in business. Your headshot should be from the shoulders up. Your face should fill most of the frame. Be sure you are the only one in the photo.

**Do you have a customized LinkedIn profile link/URL?**

LinkedIn allows you to create a vanity URL that incorporates your name without the random subsequent numbers automatically generated. In edit mode, click the pencil icon in the top of the right column that says **Edit public profile URL**. You can reference the instructions here: <https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/87?query=vanity%20url>

**Do you have an eye-catching headline which promotes what you do best?**

The headline falls directly below your photo. **This is the #1 index field on LinkedIn!** The default for this section is your current job title. Take advantage of this section by identifying your areas of expertise. The photo and your headline will be the first thing that your contacts see. The headline promotes your career brand. It should be powerful, simple, and convey your career objective with relevant position **keywords**. You have 120 characters (240 via mobile) to make a statement, and this is the place to do it!

**Building your Headline**:

Step 1: What you do – *stay targeted*

Step 2: Who or what you help – *stay targeted*

Step 3: How you make work better and valuable

Step 4: Give proof that you are credible

**Consider the answers to these questions**: For which keywords do I want to get found? Who am I? Why should you talk to me? Who is my audience? What is my value proposition? Why do I have authority and credibility? What are my goals?

To learn more about developing a strong LinkedIn headline, read this [LinkedIn Pulse article](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141203191548-87071991-your-linkedin-headline), search for other articles, and discuss a strategy with your Meridian coach.

**Do you have a compelling Profile Summary?**

The profile summary section contains your personal introduction to the business world. It should be a brief, yet powerful, first-person career summary that speaks to your **target objective** with **relevance** and contains **industry keywords** that are succinct with, or a repeat of, those in your job titles, headline, and Skills section. Do not repeat your resume summary verbatim, but do be consistent. Show your personal brand voice. This section should show **how you create value**!

You have approximately 2000 characters for this section. LinkedIn only displays the first three lines (approx. 290-310 characters) of your summary, so make these stand out! Write short, blocked, conversational text without typical jargon that will **compel** the viewer to click for more content.

To learn more about developing a strong LinkedIn summary, read this [LinkedIn Pulse article](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-write-perfect-linkedin-summary-william-arruda), search for other articles, and discuss a strategy with your Meridian coach.

**Here are some tips!**

Utilize the space available to expand describing your value to business and your work ethic (personal branding) using keywords relevant to your targeted career and industry.

* Write in first-person narrative to describe who or what you help, how you help them, and what problems you solve. Show your skills and strengths with **passion** for what you do and how you **uniquely** contribute ROI, benefits, and improvements.
* **Support Headline keywords** with 1, 2 or 3 sentences about each. Offer information **relevant to your target** such as: what you have done and can do, why you do it, how it creates value for the employer, and how much you enjoy doing it. People want to hire people who enjoy doing what they need done!
* Add the type of **industries** within your experience, if appropriate to a desired target.
* Add information on how you positively contribute to the organizations you serve such as overall total costs saved and/or revenue generated, and/or indirect impact to business (big picture) – support this portrayed wisdom / unique contribution with more detail in the Experience section.
* **Show your method / style** of negotiations & partnerships, program leadership, and personnel leadership. Include how you contribute to company culture and motivate staff.
* **Infuse Areas of Expertise and industry keywords into context.**
* You are speaking to your most important viewer so make it easy for them to access information when skim reading by utilizing short block paragraphs (no more than 5-6 lines), creating whitespace, and bullets filled with succinct and powerful information
* Consider including your contact information so that a hiring professional can quickly connect with you (and also be sure that your Contact Info field is updated).
* If your target location is not your noted current location, consider mentioning in summary.

EXAMPLE:

I am a GLOBAL SALES EXECUTIVE specializing in turning around manufacturing companies by generating revenue through building World-Class Sales, Customer Service, & Supply Chain Teams

I attribute much of my success to my passion for developing and mentoring outstanding talent. Together, we build world-class sales, customer service, and supply chain teams with specialty in scaled growth stages. My “superpower” is the ability to create an atmosphere of enthusiasm, inspiration, and teamwork that ignites people to do their best work, leading to satisfied customers and remarkable bottom-line growth.

Recently, as the VP Sales for a $101M international manufacturer / distributor, I implemented a strategic growth plan, built a world-class sales force and customer care organization, and reversed a 4-year downward growth trend.

📈 REVENUE GREW ⬆17%, EBITA INCREASED ⬆8.1%, AND PROFIT MARGINS LIFTED ⬆14% OVER 4 YEARS!

Early in my career, I was hired as a sales manager for a $100M global manufacturer. In that role, I experienced my first “turn around” success. I was hand-selected to run an $80M established sales organization, with an underperforming Northern US territory. I eagerly took the reins and redesigned the sales and marketing strategies, hired new managers, retrained everyone, and motivated the sales team with an improved compensation structure.

📈 WITHIN 3 YEARS, WE GREW REVENUE TO $300M!

After that, I was recruited by another company—a $26M manufacturer of special-needs products—to rescue and turn around their sales and services operations. In addition to improving cashflow and profitability, I expanded their sales reach across the US and Canada.

📈 I DROVE DOUBLE-DIGIT GROWTH IN 4 YEARS!

I was re-recruited by the Global CEO of the first company for a “second tour of duty” to helm the National Sales operations. Once again, I built a best-in-class sales organization—comprised of 140 sales representatives and 12 managers—that outperformed all expectations.

📈 IN 5 YEARS, SALES REVENUE SOARED FROM $250M TO $550M (120%)!

LET’S CONNECT to explore how I can contribute to your success.

☎️ 123.456.7890 or 📧 address@email.com

To learn more about developing a strong LinkedIn summary, read this [LinkedIn Pulse article](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-write-perfect-linkedin-summary-william-arruda) and discuss a strategy with your Meridian coach.

**Is the Experience section fully populated with your roles over the past 10-15 years?**

**Does the experience section reflect your key skills and accomplishments?**

The first job listed is where you should firmly display the value you bring to a prospective employer, not relying on other sections to tell the story. Be sure to include keywords to increase the potential of being found through a keyword search. Additionally, pull in your employers’ logos.

**Here are a few tips!**

* Consider turning all of your work experiences into short stories rather than simple descriptive statements, additionally with easy to read bullets.
* Reference your improved resume to include quantified achievements, but do not duplicate verbatim. This can be a first-person narrative, incorporating your “voice”, with examples of how you contributed relevant value, improvements, and results. Focus content as relevant to target.
* **Be sure to support your Summary claims** in more detail specific to the position by showing how you solved problems, made improvements, and contributed beneficial value.
* **Job Title:** Your current or most recent job title is the **#2 index field on LinkedIn!** Consider adding keywords that are important to your target audience. You can utilize up to 100 characters in this space.
* **Description field:** This section should be used to communicate what you did, how you did it, and how you helped the company to be successful (your value to business) as they are relevant to what you want to do. Place the most important, most relevant information at the top and layer in descending order. Support summary big picture claims with details specific to the position.
* **Previous positions:** Use past-tense for all previous positions and spell check. Only write about what you did in your previous roles that is relevant &/or transferrable to what you want to do or shows professional growth to who you are today.

**Have you taken full advantage of all the sections available?**

The more populated your LinkedIn profile is, the more likely you will come up during a search. In VIEW PROFILE select Add New Profile Section in top right column. Click on all drop-down menus to see the variety of elements you may add. Complete any that applies to you. Post all education, training, and certification programs in the corresponding section, which builds a stronger profile.

**Here are some tips!**

* Be sure to include Education and the course of study for each. Add extracurricular activities relevant to target.
* You can add up to 50 skills. Choose skills that are highly relevant to the work you want to do. Use the “pin” button to denote the 3 most relevant and important skills for your target to be displayed at the top of the skills window. You can use the line stack icon to shuffle the skills in order of importance within each functional area. Request endorsements.
* Review the list of available sections to determine what else may apply to you such as Certifications, Awards, Courses, Volunteering, Organizational memberships, etc.

**Do you have recommendations – both given and received?**

Recommendations are a powerful element in the LinkedIn profile. Having recommendations increases the likelihood of being pulled during a search since it typically adds more keywords to your profile. In addition, hiring managers and recruiters look for this section in your profile to view how others see you and your performance in the workplace as unsolicited references. The best way to get a recommendation is to give one. Once you submit a recommendation, LinkedIn prompts them to write one for you.

**Here are some tips!**

Ask trusted colleagues from each position to provide a recommendation – ensure some are recent. Recommend others while using keywords that are relevant to your own career target, as given recommendations will also appear on your profile.

**Do you have areas of Interests populated? (Influencers, Groups, Companies, Schools)**

Engagement in following Interests (Influencers, Groups, Companies, and Schools) immediately increases your network with people in your workspace. For groups, be an active member. Ask questions in the forums and provide your input as well. This will increase your visibility and help you continue to exercise your subject matter expertise while in transition.

**Are you engaged on the platform as a user? Review your Activities Section.**

The Activities section shows your most recent activity/posts on LinkedIn. Be an active LinkedIn member. It will benefit you and others in your network. Hiring managers and recruiters look for this.

**Here are some tips!**

Suggest becoming active and post content yourself. Share a relevant news article, post a question, or respond to a group forum. “Likes” count but are not valued as highly. (One idea is to write a post expressing a positive note of gratitude regarding your previous experiences while noting that you are in transition for a new opportunity to contribute your value to business – this will notify your network of your availability). Keep all postings professional and related to your target.

**Do you have enough connections?**

The primary purpose of LinkedIn is to allow a platform to network with other professionals. Your goal is a minimum of 100 connections with continued increases. If you have less than 100, you may not show up in search results. Look for quality contacts. It is perfectly acceptable to connect with people you worked with many years ago. In addition, as you seek out new contacts, make sure your reason makes sense. When prompted, inform the connection why you wish to do so and how it may be mutually beneficial. As you move throughout your career, continue to connect with (former / current) co-workers, external partners, and professional friends and acquaintances to expand your network.

**LinkedIn - The Key to Optimization is Keywords**

Having the right keywords in your LinkedIn profile will determine whether or not you are found when someone is performing a search on LinkedIn.

It is important to consider all the terms and phrases that someone might use in their search. For example, if you are a “mortgage banker,” others may use the term “lender” or “broker” instead of “banker.” Including all of these alternatives in your profile will increase the number of times you appear in search results.

There are many places you can include keywords related to your targeted role in your profile. Consider using them in the following sections: Headline (120 characters available), Experience (current / past titles and within position descriptions), About Summary (first person narrative and list of Areas of Expertise – optimize the first 225 characters), Skills, and Recommendations.

Using Career Explorer, discover popular skills to include in your Skills section and demonstrated as keywords throughout your profile. <https://linkedin.github.io/career-explorer/#explore>

Use this worksheet to brainstorm possible keywords for your profile.

**LinkedIn Profile Keyword Worksheet**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Titles you hold or have held  |  |
| Areas of expertise  |  |
| Industries you have worked in  |  |
| Your present and past employers’ tradenames used |  |
| Types of products or services you sell or support  |  |
| Brand names of the products / services you sell  |  |
| Job functions / responsibilities you have had  |  |
| Key results you have produced or accomplished  |  |
| Technical skills you possess  |  |
| Who you serve  |  |
| Specialty certifications or degrees you have received |  |
| Names of software / hardware / operating systems you know how to use |  |
| Languages you speak  |  |
| Regions of the world you have lived, worked, or served  |  |
| Titles of books, articles or other publications  |  |
| Clubs, associations, and groups that you belong to  |  |
| What makes you unique  |  |
| Volunteer positions you hold or have held (relevant to target) |  |
| Hobbies / activities that may be of interest to your audience |  |

**LinkedIn Profile Elements Final Checklist**

To attempt creating a completely optimized profile, follow this list to incorporate all elements applicable to you.

* Do you have a current Professional Photo?
* Do you have a descriptive Professional Headline? *(120 characters available – use keywords).*
* Are your Location and Industry listed correctly? *(Select a central zip code or metro area).*
* Have you claimed your custom LinkedIn URL? *(i.e.,* [*www.linkedin.com/in/firstnamelastname*](http://www.linkedin.com/in/firstnamelastname) *- remove random subsequent numbers).* [*https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/87?query=vanity%20url*](https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/87?query=vanity%20url)
* Have you made it easy for people to contact you in the Contact section? Does your contact info include: Email, Phone Number, City and State, and Website(s) *with anchor text Social sites*? *(Include your contact information in the Summary section as well).*
* Do you have an image uploaded to the Background of your proﬁle? *(Choose a design depicting your brand at* [*www.linkedinbackgrounds.com*](http://www.linkedinbackgrounds.com)*, or create a custom banner at* [*unsplash.com/backgrounds/apps/linkedin*](https://unsplash.com/backgrounds/apps/linkedin) *or* [*www.canva.com*](http://www.canva.com)*).*
* Do you have your Summary section ﬁlled out with plenty of keywords? Is it interesting to your prospects as a brief first-person narrative with simplified, easy to read, blocked content to present your value to business and brand? *(Infuse keywords in conversational style. Don’t use typical jargon adjectives. Instead, focus on what you do, how you do it, and why it is valuable. Additionally, duplicate keywords from your Skills section as Areas of Expertise or Specialties. Keep paragraphs and bullets under 5 lines for quick skim reading. Include your contact information near the top so that a hiring professional can quickly connect).*
* Have you added media, such as a published article, YouTube video, or a SlideShare presentation to your Summary section?
* Do you have several positions, each listed with keywords, in your Experience Section? *(Go back to a decade of experience using conversational tone in description and highlighted achievement bullets. Consider including positions, and those achievement, prior to ten years back only when relevant to your current targeted role).*
* Do you have at least 2-3 Recommendations for your most recent position? *(To optimize fully, request 2-3 recommendations from each position in your Experience section).*
* Do you have 25-50 Skills listed? *(List at the top your most significant skills related to your targeted role / job description, regardless of the number of endorsements).*
* Do you have your Education listed with appropriate areas of study and keywords? *(Add significant roles in related clubs).*
* Have you listed related Courses to show professional development?
* Have you listed any relevant Honors and Awards that you’ve received?
* Have you linked to any Publications that you’ve written?
* Have you included all relevant Projects that you were involved with?
* Have you included your professional certiﬁcations in the Certiﬁcation section? *(You should also note certifications in your Summary, in your Headline, &/or possibly on your name line).*
* Have you listed your Volunteer Work (relevant to target role) and included a bit of information about each?
* Do you list the Organizations that you support or are affiliated with? *(Keep all professional).*
* Do you have keywords listed in your Interests section?
* Have you joined 10-25 LinkedIn Groups that your target market are members of?
* Do you have 100-500+ connections in your LinkedIn network?
* Are you regularly updating your LinkedIn Status and participating in posts and Group activity? *(At least a couple of times per week).*
* Consider selecting the “Open to Work” option, or “Update Career Interests” under the Jobs tab.
* Consider upgrading to Premium to utilize inmail and other functional tools, and to access professional development training via Lynda.com and Premium Career Group support and advice.
* Proofread and edit for proper grammar, punctuation and correct spelling. Use an app tool, such as Grammarly.